

# It's time to prepare for West Nile Virus

BY LT. COL. JOE SCHURHAMMER

377th Aerospace Medicine Squadron  
Public Health

Mosquitoes spread West Nile Virus, which can cause severe and sometimes fatal illness.

There were over 9858 cases of West Nile disease in the United States during 2003, including 166 deaths. New Mexico reported 209 cases and no deaths in 2003. While there have been no WNV cases reported thus far in 2004, all mainland states will see West Nile virus activity.

To help prepare for mosquito season, read the truth about some common West Nile virus myths:

## Common WNV myths

**Myth 1: There's not much I can do about West Nile virus.**

Truth: There is a lot that you, personally, can do to reduce your chance of West Nile virus infection.

Reduce the number of mosquito bites you get. Make a habit of using insect repellent with DEET when outdoors. Spray repellent on exposed skin and clothing. Use repellent safely. Always read and follow product instructions.

★ Prime mosquito-biting hours are usually dusk to dawn. Pay special attention to protection during these hours, or avoid being outdoors.

★ You can reduce the number of mosquitoes around your home. Mosquitoes breed in standing water, so check your yard once a week: get rid of containers that aren't being used, empty water from flower pots, change water in bird baths and maintain clean gutters.

★ Make sure window and door screens are in good condition. Have an older neighbor or family member? See if they need help installing or repairing screens.

**Myth 2: Kids are at the most danger of getting sick from West Nile virus.**

Truth: People over 50 are at the highest risk for developing severe West Nile disease.

★ Relatively few children have been reported with severe West Nile Virus disease. By contrast, most of the deaths due to WNV were among people over 50 years old. Half of those deaths were among people over 77 years old.

★ It is always a good idea for children to avoid mosquito bites, but it's also important for adults—especially older adults—to take steps to avoid mosquito bites.

**Myth 3: It's only people who are already in poor health who have to worry about West Nile virus.**

Truth: Healthy, active older adults who spend time working and exercising outdoors have been affected by severe West Nile virus infection.

★ Being over 50 is a risk factor for developing severe West Nile disease if infected with the virus. There is a risk of getting mosquito bites while leading an active life outdoors. This doesn't mean you have to stay inside—it does mean that it's important to use repellent when you go outside.

**Myth 4: Repellents containing DEET are not safe.**

Truth: Repellents containing DEET are very safe when used according to directions.

★ Because DEET is so widely used, a great deal of testing has been done. When manufacturers seek registration with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for products such as DEET, laboratory testing regarding both short-term and long-term health effects must be carried out.

★ There are products with different strengths (percentage of DEET) available. The longer the protection you need the higher percent of DEET needed.

★ Repellent with DEET can be used for both adults and children, according to directions

**Myth 5: As long as my area has a mosquito control program, I don't have to worry about using repellent.**

Truth: Mosquito control activities don't eliminate every mosquito, so personal protection is still important.

★ Public activities, such as using products to kill mosquito larvae and adult mosquitoes, are one part of control. Personal protection, such as using repellent, keeping window screens in good condition, and control of household breeding sites are other important steps.

★ Collaboration between the community, the family and the individual is needed to achieve the best prevention of West Nile virus infection.

## Symptoms of WNV

Approximately 80 percent of people who are infected with WNV will not show any symptoms at all.

Up to 20 percent of the people who become infected will display mild symptoms, including fever, headache and body aches, nausea, vomiting and

sometimes swollen lymph glands or a skin rash on the chest, stomach and back. Symptoms typically last a few days.

About one in 150 people infected with WNV will develop severe illness. The severe symptoms can include high fever, headache, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, vision loss, numbness and paralysis.

These symptoms may last several weeks, and neurological effects may be permanent.

## Animals and WNV

**Horses:** Can be a host for the virus—roughly one in three affected animals die or are euthanized.

Vaccines are available to protect your horse and vaccination is required for all horses stabled on Kirtland AFB. If not vaccinated, an infected horse can transmit the disease to a mosquito that in turn can transmit the disease to a person.

**Dogs and cats:** While dogs and cats can become infected, evidence of clinical disease is uncommon.

Only cats have been shown capable of transmitting the virus to a mosquito that can in turn transmit the virus to people or other pets. There are no approved vaccines available for dogs or cats, however an effective repellent is available for dogs through your veterinarian.

**Dead birds:** Don't handle them with your bare hands. Reporting of dead birds is not necessary and individuals with gloved hands or a shovel may remove them.

If there are any questions, you can contact Public Health or the Albuquerque health department.

**What is the 377th Medical Group Public Health Office doing about WNV?**

The 377th Medical Group Public Health Office is conducting WNV joint surveillance and control measures with the City of Albuquerque's Environmental Health Department. It is also creating new education tools for the public based on evolving data and evidence.

For more information contact the CDC public response hotline, 888-246-2675 (English), 888-246-2857 (Español) or 866-874-2646 (TTY); 377th Medical Group Public Health Office, 846-3461; Albuquerque Environmental Health Web site, [www.cabq.gov/envhealth/index.html](http://www.cabq.gov/envhealth/index.html) and the Kirtland AFB Veterinary Clinic, 846-4280 or 846-4276.



Photo by Lisa Gonzales

## 'Round the neighborhood

Kirtland AFB's new privatized housing units in Village I, on the future Blazing Star Court, will be ready for families to occupy by late summer. Siding and stucco work has begun on the exterior of the homes and drywall work is being done on the interiors.

## Training, license needed for base home childcare

Air Force Family Child Care programs consist of in-home care provided by licensed or affiliated providers living in government owned or leased housing.

Family childcare providers are generally spouses of active duty personnel that choose to stay at home, yet contribute to the family income.

The AF has approximately 3,600 licensed and trained family childcare providers that provide daily, night, weekend and unusual hours of care for over 22,000 children, two weeks—12 years of age.

Family childcare providers receive extensive training and are provided specialized in-home assistance and monitoring by the services' Family Member Program's professional staff.

The Air Force requires that all individuals caring for other families' children a total of more than 10 hours a week on a regular basis be licensed to provide care in on-base quarters.

The 10 hours is not for each child in your care, it is a total number of hours for all children in your care. This policy does not apply to individuals who occasionally provide care for a friend or neighbor, baby-sitting on an occasional basis, or teenagers providing evening or weekend baby-sitting.

It also does not apply to child care provided in the parent's home, parent cooperatives or temporary full-time care of a child during a parent's absence for temporary duty or deployment by the person listed on the Air Force Form 357, *Family Care Plan*.

For information on becoming a licensed provider, stop by the Family Child Care office in Building 20415 or call 846-1802.

# Angel Awards

## *Nominations needed for best volunteers awards*

Nominate your favorite hard-working TEAM KIRTLAND volunteer for the Angel Award or Volunteer Excellence Award presented June 4.

The theme for this year's volunteer recognition event is "Volunteers—Making a Better Tomorrow Today." All volunteers nominated or attending the event will be appreciated for their support and hard work with a cookout at the Rio Grande Community Center, June 4.

All volunteers are eligible for door prizes. Volunteers' families and friends are welcome to attend a ceremony at 11 a.m. followed by the cookout.

The Angel Award nominations are for people who contribute significantly to the well-being of Air Force people, their families and our military community.

Nominees can be active duty, retiree, base civilian members, the family members of those people or those whose only connection to the installation is through their volunteer work. The award is given once only to any individual within three calendar years since receiving the award.

Any TEAM KIRTLAND member may make a nomination.

The Air Force Volunteer Excellence Award for federal civilians, family members and military and federal retirees recognizes those who perform outstanding volunteer community

service of a sustained, direct and consequential nature.

Volunteer service must be direct, such as manning a crisis phone, rather than including membership and attending meetings for taskings or organization. Awards may be given posthumously whenever appropriate with approval of the installation commander.

Individuals are eligible to receive the award only one time.

Nominations will be accepted at the Family Support Center in the Consolidated Support Building 20245. Visit or call 846-0741 for nomination information.

**SERVICES**

*Did you know?*

**Who to call to reserve a park**

**Bicentennial Park.....846-1499**

**Millennium Park..... 846-1499**

**Green Grass Park.....846-2042**

**Hardin Parade Field..... 846-4119**